

Message Text

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12/14

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 AID-05 EB-07

/083 W

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O 222340Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1699

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3368

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (GARBLED TEXT)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, PGOV, PINT, ES, HO

SUBJECT: EMBASSY COMMENTS ON GOH ANALYSIS OF PRESENT BORDER CRISIS

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 3540

(B) SAN SALVADOR 3272

1. REFTTEL (B) CONVEYED THE ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS OF TWO SENIOR GOH OFFICIALS ON THE POSSIBLE CAUSES OF, AND ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION(S) TO, THE PRESENT SERIES OF BORDER INCIDENTS. THIS EMBASSY'S READING GAVE US THE IMPRESSION OF THE GOH WANTING TO TRANSMIT TWO PRINCIPAL THEMES: (1) THE INSTIGATION OF EACH ROUND OF SHOOTING HAS BEEN FROM THE SALVADORAN SIDE, AND THE "ROOT CAUSE" OF THE TWO COUNTRIES' INABILITY TO ARRIVE AT A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION IS TIED TO DOMESTIC SALVADORAN POLITICS; AND (2) THE GOH IS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT RECOURSE TO THE PROTOCOL OF SAN JOSE AS A MEANS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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RESOLVING THE RECURRENCE OF BORDER INCIDENTS AND PREFERS AN APPEAL DIRECTLY TO A YET TO BE DESIGNED OAS MECHANISM. WITHOUT QUESTIONING THE MOTIVES OF THE HONDURAN CONTACTS, OR ACCEPTING AT FACE VALUE THE CONTRADICTIONARY

DESCRIPTIONS RECEIVED FROM THEIR SALVADORAN COUNTER-PARTS, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE FOLLOWING THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS WOULD BE HELPFUL TO THE DEPARTMENT AND ADD TO OVERALL PERCEPTION.

2. PROBABLE CAUSE - REFTEL (A) STATES THAT THE GOH SPOKESMEN FEEL THAT THE RECENT SERIES OF CLASHES WAS CAUSED BY SALVADORAN TROOPS OPENING FIRE, DOING SO AS A RESULT OF INTERNAL SALVADORAN "POLITICAL INSTABILITY", I.E., "AGRARIAN REFORM TENSIONS, RODRIGUEZ'

SCANDAL, ETC.". FROM THIS DISTANCE FROM THE FIGHTING AND WITH THE ONE-SIDED BIAS OF OUR SOURCES OF INFORMATION, THE EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO CONFIRM OR DENY EITHER SIDE'S CLAIM AS TO WHO IS SHOOTING FIRST. AS DESCRIBED REFTEL (B), AND IN SUBSEQUENT DATT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SALVADORAN MOD AND CHIEF-OF-STAFF,

THE GOES CLAIMS LUAT ITS TROOPS WERE ON THE RECEIVING END OF THE OPENING FIRE. ON THE QUESTION OF A "ROOT" CAUSE OF THIS OUTBREAK, HOWEVER, WE FEEL SOMEWHAT MORE CONFIDENT IN SAYING THAT THE GOH PERCEPTION IS IN ERROR. WHILE IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO EXCLUDE, CATEGORICALLY, ALL SUCH INCIDENTS AS INTENDED TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS, WE NEVERTHELESS DOUBT THAT IT IS OCCURRING AT THIS TIME.

THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CONTROVERSY AND DEBATE OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRST AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION PROJECT, BUT THAT POLEMIC HAS NOT BECOME THE GENERATOR OF SCHISMS WITHIN THE MILITARY OFFICER CORPS, NOR BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THAT ESSENTIAL BASE OF SUPPORT. SECOND, THREATS TO STABILITY OF THE GOES FROM THE RODRIGUEZ CASE HAVE BEEN SUPERSEDED BY TIME AND THE ABSENCE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC COMMENT. SINCE IT NOW ATTRACTS MINIMUM ATTENTION, AND IS NOT LIKELY TO DO SO AGAIN UNTIL THE TRIAL OPENS IN SEPT. THERE IS NO APPRECIABLE NEED FOR THE GOES TO RESORT TO SUCH AN OBVIOUSLY RISKY DIVERSION. THE PRESENT DOMESTIC POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IS OTHERWISE RELATIVELY CALM.

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3. SAN JOSE PROTOCOL - AS MENTIONED IN REFTEL (B), OUR GOES CONTACTS TOLD US THAT THE LAST CHIEFS-OF-STAFF MEETING AT THE BORDER BROKE DOWN WHEN THE GOH COUNTERPARTS REJECTED THE MILITARY PULLBACK PROVISIONS OF THE SAN JOSE PROTOCOL. REFTEL (A) INFORMS THAT THE GOH DOES NOT WANT TO ABIDE BY OTHER TERMS, AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM, OF THAT AGREEMENT. GOH APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS TO HAVE THD GUARANTOR PROVISIONS OF THE PROTOCOL CARRIED OUT BY THE THREE CA NEIGHBORS, AND ITS PREFERENCE FOR DIRECT OAS INTERVENTION IS PERPLEXING IN LIGHT OF THE GOH'S REPEATED REFERENCES, PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, TO ITS WILLINGNESS TO IMPLEMENT THE SAN JOSE PROTOCOL AS THE BEST MEANS OF ENDING THE BORDER CLASHES.

BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE GOES
WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO DIRECT OAS INTERVENTION IN THE FORM OF
OBSERVERS, SINCE IT ITSELF HAS PROFFERED THAT SUGGESTION
IN THE RECENT PAST.

4. SUSPENDING JUDGMENT ON THE GOH INTERPRETATION OF
THE "ROOT CAUSES" OF THIS RECENT OUTBREAK, IT IS
DIFFICULT TO TIE THAT INTERPRETATION INTO THE SERIES OF EVENTS ON
THE HONDURAN SIDE OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS WHICH
HAVE TWICE BROUGHT DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS TO A HALT, NAMELY THE
REPLACEMENT OF BATRES BY PERDOMO WHEN THE FORMER FELT HE
WAS NEAR AGREEMENT, AND THE RECENT DUMPING OF PERDOMO WHEN
HE, TOO, THOUGHT HE WAS PROGRESSING TOWARD A SETTLEMENT. GOES
SPOKESMEN EXPRESS PERPLEXITY AND FRUSTRATION AT WHAT THEY
SEE AS AN OBVIOUS LACK OF AUTHORITY OF THE GOH NEGOTIATORS, AND
INDECISIVENESS OF THOSE BEHIND THEM. UNDOUBTEDLY, THE RECENT
HONDURAN ACQUISITION OF JET AIRCRAFT IS A FACTOR WHICH
THE GOES HAS ALSO TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT TO EXPLAIN THE RECENT
HARDENING OF THE GOH POSITION. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT
BY INADVERTANT OR DELIBERATE ACT BY EITHER PARTY, THE
PRESENT SITUATION COULD FURTHER DETERIORATE. UNDER
THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE EARLY INTERVENTION BY SOME
APPROPRIATE THIRD PARTY, ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH, SUCH AS THE
OAS COMMITTEE OF SEVEN, WOULD SEEM HIGHLY DESIRABLE.
CAMPBELL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 15 SEP 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BORDER INCIDENTS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, POLITICAL SITUATION, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: powellba
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SANSAA03368
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D760285-0660, D760283-0026
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t197607109/baaenrq.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: powellba
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15 JUL 2004 by coburnhl>; APPROVED <26 OCT 2004 by powellba>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EMBASSY COMMENTS ON GOH ANALYSIS OF PRESENT BORDER CRISIS
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, PGOV, PINT, ES, HO
To: STATE INFO GUATEMALA
MANAGUA
SAN JOSE
TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO
Type: TE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006